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Z. RAGAN, Editor and Proprietor.

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A GOOD STORY.

How he Escaped.

By MERITABLE HOLYOKE.

Yes, my dear Miss Meritable, I was a married man once, and now am a happy bachelor.

I talk enigmas, do I? You shall hear my story then, if you have patience.

And how I escaped from my wife?—Most assuredly; that is the culminating point of interest, the denouement of my romance.

As you may remember, I had lived along from year to year, and was far past boyhood before it seemed convenient to take the blessing of a wife.

What was there to prevent? Oh there were countless things. I had a small fortune to be sure, but every year brot some new drain upon my income; now, I had joined a military company; now, I liked hunting, and guns and ammunition have their price; I read Isaac Walton, and that year all my surplus funds went for fishing poles, artificial flies and excursions into the country. I was fond of horses too—indeed I had a hundred sensible tastes.

And why were these not sufficient?—Why wasn't the first man satisfied with all the roses and grapes of Eden, but he must go meddling with one tree of forbidden fruit!

So ladies did not smile upon me? I beg your pardon Miss Meritable! When once my mind was made up to select a wife, the trouble was, that all the young and old maidens of my acquaintance were ready to fall into my arms. They smiled too readily. The fishermen would not enjoy his trout if he could hale them up by the net full at once, like sardines.

Meanwhile, I must make ready for the change of lot. My indiscretions and misfortunes began. I sold my beautiful farm for a little estate in the suburbs of the city; my yacht and hunter went for a carriage and span. It was spend, spend! for furniture, curtains, silver, porcelain—

And the lady? Oh, I had not found her yet. In truth the preparations cost me so much, that I began to be tired of the fancy. I looked about at my married acquaintances; their happiness if they could boast any, seemed of a foolish sort. And some had elatedly wives, some had sickly or scolding ones, and some had a swarm of children, homely children—

When I saw these unfortunates, I could but think how idle it were to walk in the same predicament.

Only one among all my friends did I envy. He was the best marksman—the most adroit angler that I ever met, and had the sweetest tempered wife. Poor fellow, he suffered wretchedly from the lingering effects of a rheumatic fever, and his young wife gave up all her own pleasures in order to nurse and amuse him. They were both of a lively, happy disposition; and then they had no children—those domestic pests. I see their parlor now, with the bright blazing fire, and Lester's sofa drawn into the warmest place beside it; and the wife near, with her pretty face and neat tasteful dress. Ah, why were they ever separated?

He died from the fever? No, thank fortune! Lester did not die from the fever; but his business suffered from lazy inattention; debts began to accumulate; I advanced money until my poor friend was ashamed to ask for more; and his wife came to me in secret, asking temporary help, giving her word that the obligation should be cancelled by her own hands, if need were. I was not sorry for an excuse to defer the subject of matrimony; I made the Lesters occupy my house as it stood, their tact and taste could take from its interior the new look which annoyed me. I left the pipes of my patent steam furnace to freeze, and opened good, broad fire places, that we might have the accustomed blaze.

Then I went to live with them? Yes, at their request. And I never saw such touching devotion and such perfect happiness as seemed to exist between those two. Many a time, while appearing to sleep in my chair, I would sit listening to their low conversation.

Disbonorable! Pray do not imagine they were talking secrets; or that they hadn't lived long enough, and seen the pros and cons of life thoroughly enough, to be past the foolish prattle of lovers. No Miss Meritable, the young wife would relate to her invalid husband all her sweet earnest thoughts of life and duty, and the substance of the books she found time to read.

You can imagine the scene? Would it had ended there! Would we had then and there fallen asleep like the fairy prince, and known nothing of the trouble to come!

Lester's physician advised a change of climate, and circumstances pointed to California as his goal. He was young, full of enterprise.

He sailed, he sent letters home with great regularity, his health improved—broke down—down; he was gaining again—sent money home—his letters were full of hope, and then there came a blank silence. Vessel after vessel arrived, and no letter for us; the only trace we could gain lay in a rumor which might be true or false; some one had seen him on his way to the mines, and heard of his illness there from contact with a poisonous weed, and no more.

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A Temperance Lecture.

BY THE RAZOR-STROP MAN.

"Some folks say it is right to drink alcohol because it is a good creature of God. Well, grant that it is so—so is castor oil, and so is vinegar a good creature of God; but that is not sufficient reason for a person to drink it three or four, or a dozen times a day! A dog is a good creature of God—but suppose a dog goes mad and bites a man or a woman, would you let him alone because, as you say, he is a good creature? Would you be satisfied with cutting off his tail, or would you knock him on the head and pitch him into the street? Now, alcohol is more than a mad dog; for a bite from a mad dog only destroys life, while a bite from alcohol destroys reason, reputation, life, and everything else, besides dragging down the family of the bitten man to poverty and want."

"But alcohol doesn't bite a mouthful at first. When he first snipped at me he only tickled me a little. I liked it first, and was anxious to get another bite. The old rascal of a tyrant kept nibbling at my heels as though he didn't mean to hurt me, while I like a fool, kept coaxing him on, till at last he gave me a snap in the ear, and took the elbow out of my coat."

Next he took the crown out of my hat, the shoes off my feet, the money out of my pocket, the sense out of my head, till at last I went raging-mad through the streets, perfectly a victim to alcohol—but I signed the pledge and got cured; and if there is any man here who has been bitten as I'll warrant, let him take this tetotal medicine and I'll warrant he'll be a speedy cure."

"But allowing alcohol is a good creature of God, are there not other creatures, too, such as beef, pork, puddings, pies, clothes, dollars, and fifty others of the "same sort?" Now, shall a man drink whiskey because it is a good creature, and go without a good, handsome wife, and good, well-dressed children? No sir—ee! As for me, give me good beef and pudding, good pork and sausage, good friends, good clothes, and good wife and children, (or rather than miss, I will try and make them good) and king alcohol may go to Texas, for all I care."

"Some say that wine is a good creature because our Saviour once turned water into wine. Very good; but then he didn't turn rum, gin, logwood, cocculus indicus and coch-reaches, into wine, as some people do. He turned water into wine."

Now, if any wine bibbing apologist will take a gallon or a barrel of pure water, and by prying over it, or in any other way, convert it into first rate wine, I'm the boy as will go in for a swig of it!"

A Tale of Scotland.

A party of troopers entered the house of a widow, and demanded and received refreshment. A well grown lad, the widow's son, waited upon them—the widow hospitably offering to their wants all she had to command.

"And how do you live in these troublous times, Goody?" asked one of the mercenaries with an air of kindness.

"Well I thank Heaven," answered the poor widow, "my good man left me a cow and a garden with that bit of field; I do not complain."

"Indeed!" ejaculated the ruffian. "Corporal Spiedgelt, what say you to try if Heaven help her without a cow?"

"Ach! mein Gott! der garten is enoof! Mit it zoer verlachene! ha! ha!" and the fellow laughed. "Kil der schuchtern machten, (the cow) and spoil ter milch and ter kase, (cheese)!"

"Ay," quoth the fellow, with a hoarse laugh; "and so it will. So Goody, here goes with the honors of war—tarra! and he drew his sword."

"What are you going to do?" cried the youth, springing forward, with tears in his eyes and terror in his face.